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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

13 April 1950

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 283

SUBJECT: The Nature and Probable Future Development of Soviet Hostile Actions, Short of War, Against the United States as They Relate to US Internal Security.

NOTE

This memorandum was prepared in partial fulfillment of a specific request of the Interdepartmental Committee on Internal Security, which set the terms of reference under which it was written. It is addressed specifically to the question of the probable future development of hostile Soviet action, short of war, against the US, in terms of US internal security.

In Communist doctrine, there can be no such thing as peace and mutual tolerance between the United States, the citadel of the dying capitalist world order, and the USSR, the leader and protector of the Communist world revolution.

The normal and constant relationship between the United States and the USSR is that of a life-or-death struggle. Whether the struggle takes the form of armed conflict or is limited to internal subversion is merely a question of the technical means appropriate in the circumstances at any particular time.

In the Communist view, the eventual disintegration and collapse of capitalist society is inevitable, as the result of its inherent contradictions. This process of disintegration will be marked by:

Note: This memorandum has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force.

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- (1) Increasingly severe economic depressions (e.g., 1929).
- (2) Imperialist wars in which predatory capitalist states seek their own survival by preying on others (e.g., 1939).
- (3) The development of "revolutionary situations" which permit the final overthrow of capitalism in particular countries (e.g., Russia in 1917, Eastern Europe in 1945, China in 1949).

The essential characteristics of a "revolutionary situation" are:

- (1) The masses must be disillusioned and disaffected, ready to accept a change.
- (2) The rulers must be discredited and themselves divided and disorganized, incapable of operating their former system of control.
- (3) There must exist a militant revolutionary (Communist) minority organized and ready to seize control by force.

The general trend toward the eventual disintegration of capitalist society is regarded as constant and inevitable, but within it there is to be expected a periodicity of ebb and flow, with periods of recovery and stabilization followed by ever more serious crises.

Moreover, during this final phase of capitalism there is constant danger that the capitalist world, in desperation, may combine to attack and destroy the USSR in the hope of thus averting its own inevitable end.

The function of the USSR, in this context, is to provide a secure base and powerful protection for the world revolution and to hasten by every expedient means the final disintegration and overthrow of capitalism.

The function of the Communist Party in the United States is to hasten, by every means of subversion, the final disintegration and overthrow of capitalism in the United States (the development of a "revolutionary situation"), and meanwhile to be constantly prepared to serve as a fifth column in behalf of the USSR in the event

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of the anticipated war of survival. The Communist Party is operating both openly as a legal political party and covertly as an underground "apparatus."

In terms of the essential elements of the "revolutionary situation" previously referred to, the constant endeavor of the Communist Party in the United States is to:

(1) Spread disillusionment and disaffection among the masses of the population, working particularly on the resentments of those elements who feel themselves to be the victims of discrimination.

(2) Discredit the government and render ineffective its control over the situation.

(3) Develop an effective cadre of militant native Communists capable of seizing and exercising power when the situation is ripe, or of serving as an effective fifth column in the event of war.

The object of these efforts is obviously not a revolution tomorrow, which would be beyond the most sanguine Communist expectations, but long-term preparation for eventual revolution--or war between the US and the USSR.

Unfortunately, there do exist conditions in this country which facilitate this program of subversion (e.g., social dissatisfactions resulting from sub-normal standards of living in some areas and from racial discrimination). At the same time, there are strengths in American democracy which militate against Communist subversion (e.g., the actual relation of US capital to labor and to government is not at all in accordance with Communist preconceptions and, in spite of areas of sub-normal living standards, the general standard of living has been rising steadily).

A most obvious target for Communist subversive agitation is the Negro minority (10 percent of the population), which is admittedly subject to many disabilities and frustrations by reason of racial discrimination. The Communists do not create this

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internal tension, but they do aggravate and exploit it. The measure of their success is not how many Negroes become militant Communists--few do--but how many despair of ever enjoying free and equal membership in the American community, or even of obtaining rudimentary justice, and so become acutely resentful of their lot and indisposed to defend the established order.

Similarly, unassimilated minorities of recent foreign origin are a remunerative target for Communist agitation (28 percent of the population are foreign born or native born of foreign parentage). Any self-conscious minority with residual loyalties to its country of origin or with a sense of injustice affords a target for subversion. The object is not primarily to convert these minorities to Communism, but rather to disillusion them regarding American democracy and so to render them indifferent to the perpetuation of the established order.

According to Communist doctrine, industrial labor should be a particularly remunerative target. Actually, this supposition is based on an out-of-date concept of industrial labor relations, and of the actual position of labor in the US democratic system. It is not particularly applicable in modern America. In contrast to the situation in, say, France and Italy, where the Communists control the principal labor organizations (CGT and CGIL), Communism has failed to gain control of the US labor movement, or of any major segment of it. Recently, indeed, the Communists did control several major components of the CIO and had fair prospect of gaining control of the CIO itself. Since then, however, the trend has been toward their elimination. Nevertheless, they will keep trying and any important labor grievances will afford them opportunities for agitation.

Communist efforts to penetrate organized labor have been directed especially toward key unions in the fields of transportation, communications, and public administration. Although open Communist leadership of these unions is being eliminated, that will not of itself uproot the clandestine apparatus presumably

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established during the period of Communist ascendancy. This apparatus, of course, has significance as a potential fifth column.

Agitation to promote disaffection merges with that to discredit the government and paralyze its ability to control the situation. Propagation of the ideas that the government is controlled by Wall Street rather than by electorate, and that the police and the courts are instruments of repression rather than of order and justice may seem absurd in particular instances, but the Communists probably expect them to pay off in cumulative effect in the long run. Government intervention in labor disputes, with the risk of converting the conflict into one between labor and government, may facilitate this line of agitation.

The Communists' greatest success in the United States has been, not among the proletariat, but among idealistic and dissatisfied intellectuals. The Hiss case is a prime example. Disillusionment with Capitalism and antipathy towards Fascism during the thirties brought in many recruits. Subsequent disillusionment with Soviet policy since 1939 has caused many to drop away, but not all.

The Communists may be expected to attempt to penetrate all idealistic organizations which might be used to weaken US military defenses, to reduce US determination to resist Soviet aggression, and to encourage dangerous concessions to the USSR for the sake of an accommodation.

Communist activity will continue along the lines indicated, without variation in Communist objectives and methods. Any development in the situation will be a function of changing conditions in this country rather than of Communist intentions and efforts. Any progress in the improvement of social and industrial relations will tend to reduce Communist capabilities. Conversely, any deterioration, and particularly the development of a depression like that of 1929, with its consequent social tensions, will tend to facilitate Communist agitation. Apart from the possibility of such a depression, the principal opportunity for Communist

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exploitation would be mounting apprehension regarding the disastrous consequences of an atomic war and a consequent tendency toward pacifism.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government's representatives themselves may be expected to attempt continual espionage--economic, political, and military--including the penetration of important governmental departments.

The Communist apparatus in the US is presumably preparing plans for extensive sabotage operations against key industrial installations and possibly also against political targets. Preparations may also be under way for bacteriological operations. An estimate of the extent of these preparations, or of Communist capabilities for implementing them, is not within the cognizance of CIA. It does not appear likely that the Communists will attempt to execute their plans on any wide scale prior to the approach of open hostilities between the US and the USSR. It should be expected, however, that a Soviet attack upon the US or the outbreak of war between the US and USSR would be preceded, or accompanied by, full-scale sabotage efforts. A surprise Soviet air attack upon the US might also be accompanied by attempts to deliver atomic bombs in US harbors by merchant ships or submarines.

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